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AUTHOR Louw, W. J.
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ABSTRACT

Students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria have their student teaching performance assessed through the use of video-recorded micro-teaching situations. Three sources of video-teaching situations are used in the training of student teachers: (1) while teaching specific high school subjects; (2) senior teachers in their high school classes; and (3) while micro-teaching high school pupils or a group of peers. Along with the recording, student teachers submit a self assessment of their teaching performance, students' assessment of the classroom experience, and information regarding classroom context. The student teachers and their supervisors review the videotape together to study in detail the planning and execution of the lesson, and they also make an analytical appraisal of the teaching. While this approach emphasizes to student teachers that they must meet an adequate level of competence in the profession, the approach also clearly considers the imprecise nature of the assessment of teaching. Students are initially apprehensive, but most appreciate the learning process involved with videotape recording. The report concludes that this approach offers a very useful method for stimulation of continuous professional development. Evaluation forms are appended. (CB)

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video-recorded micro-teaching situations and their contribution towards the pre-service professional training of student teachers for the secondary school.

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Dr W J Louw

Professor of Education,

University of Pretoria

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1. Context

Ever since it was established in 1937, the Faculty of Education of this university has been involved in training teachers. Aims, methods and means have varied, reflecting current theories of teaching and learning and the sophistication of available training aids. Variations notwithstanding, the faculty has retained two basic characteristics in its approach and execution of teacher training : one is that all members of the academic departments in the faculty are involved in teacher training and the other is that professional and practical training is constructed on a firm and extensive theoretical base. In fact, practical teaching (and therefore practice teaching) is seen as the culmination of theory.

It is for this reason that the assessment of teaching practice is given a lot of attention and provides the focal point of on-going research (Louw, 1985). Research findings provide the feedback to adjust the instruments and philosophy of assessment as well as the need to re-examine basic assumptions regarding the aims of teaching practice as such. Generally speaking the aim of the program is to train a post graduate teacher student to design and actualize the total educational and didactic situation accountably. This general

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aim implies a number of specific objectives which in turn are translated into specific teaching skills e.g. skills and abilities to reduce teaching content to basic elements, to communicate effectively, to identify orthopedagogic and orthodidactic instances in the classroom, to employ motivational techniques, to understand and utilize psycho-sociological dynamics, etc. These objectives clearly form the basis in terms of which criteria are constructed to assess the quality of the student teacher's practice teaching.

2. Phases of practice teaching

All post-graduate student teachers preparing to teach in secondary schools undergo three practice teaching periods : at the beginning of the academic year in January; during May-June (at the end of the first semester) and during September-October near the end of the second semester. Each practice teaching period lasts for three weeks. No formal assessment is made during the January period while the second and third periods are progressively assessed by faculty members and senior staff of host schools.

The purpose of the January practice teaching period is to introduce the student as a prospective teacher to the school situation. This is the first opportunity the student has to experience the school as a teacher. If the experience is negative, the student can enroll for a different course of study without much disruption. This practice teaching period is mainly devoted to observation of classroom activities. For this purpose a number of observation instruments were designed and prior to visiting host schools, students attend a three day orientation program. The purpose of the

program is to explain what is to be observed and to introduce the student to the reality of the classroom as an ecological system characterized by multi-dimensionality, simultaneity and unpredictability (Copeland, 1981). During the orientation program every student takes part in a micro-teaching session which is video-recorded. The purpose of this exposure to the system of video-recorded micro-teaching situations is dealt with fully later on - at this stage it is important to note that this material provides a first opportunity for diagnostic evaluation.

The orientation the student must undergo in the school and the activities to be observed in the classroom is designed in such a way that the student is sensitised to the fact that learning to teach involves learning the texture of the classroom and a set of behaviours congruent with the environmental demands of that setting (Doyle, 1977) in terms of the teachers own personality, abilities and style (Baumgärtner, 1969).

An equally important aim of the first practice teaching period is to provide the student with a set of experiences to form a framework that can be referred to when attempting to interpret and integrate theories and descriptions of a pedagogic nature. Although no formal assessment of the student is made during observation teaching practice, participating senior teachers and school principals observe general aspects of the student's behaviour like ability to integrate and communicate with pupils and members of staff, general attitude and disposition, social style, willingness to accept tasks, etc. The observations are submitted in the form of confidential reports and are carefully perused by members of faculty for indicators

of potential or actual problem areas which must be given consideration during the rest of the training. This procedure forms the point of departure for the formative method of assessment and provides the material for initial diagnostic evaluation.

After returning from initial observation practice teaching, students proceed with the theoretical and professional program - including micro-teaching sessions. During this period, before the second practice teaching session, students are intensively involved in study modules aimed at understanding teaching and pedagogic concepts. In fact, these modules are chosen with the express purpose to provide the student with the conceptual background to understand the dynamics, motivations, structures, relationships, etc. in the classroom in order to be able to act intelligently in the teaching-learning situation. The modules are organized to provide a systematic introduction to the study of pedagogics and its related specialities (Louw, 1973; Clark, 1978; Margetson, 1979). In this way the harmony between theory and practice is forged. However, it must be understood that the theoretical modules are not exclusively chosen because they provide functional and structural concepts for practice teaching - this would mean that certain pedagogical issues that do not appear directly in the classroom, have no scientific standing. Put differently, this would mean that the school provides a point of scientific departure to explain and describe all pedagogic and didactic issues (Van der Stoep and Louw, 1984).

Apart from the intensive study of theoretical modules mentioned above, the period between January and May is devoted to practical aspects of teaching. Subject Didactics forms an important corner-

stone of the training in the sense that general fundamental padagogic, didactic pedagogic, psycho-pedagogic and socia-pedagogic research findings are interpreted in terms of the nature of the specific school subjects and the specific demands of the specific child to be taught (i.e. school standard and level). Much of the work in Subject Didactics is practical and extensive use is made of microteaching. We accept that microteaching can partially duplicate aspects of the actual teaching situation but we also share the reservations of Cooper (1980). These are dealt with more fully later.

During the first semester students undergo intensive training in aspects like speech training and communication skills, the production and didactically accountable introduction of teaching and learning aids and classroom organization and management.

For the rest of the academic year students intensify their studies in the areas mentioned above. During the second semester, from July to the end of October, modules in ortho-pedagogics, ortho-didactics and History and Comparative Education are introduced. Once more the focus is on concepts and dynamics related to the teaching situation but without losing sight of the structure of these pedagogic perspectives.

As far as assessment is concerned, the objectives vary according to the exposure the student has had to teaching concepts, actual practice teaching experience and micro-teaching simulated experiences. As was mentioned above, the assessment during initial observation practice teaching is general and primarily concerned with the stu-

dent's attitude, disposition and general communication skills. This assessment is obviously subjective and reflects the perceptions of lecturers and participating teachers on the suitability of the student for the teaching profession. Subjectivity, as a basis for assessment, is in itself no disqualification provided it is done systematically. Subjective procedures provide important data to draw a preliminary profile of the student's suitability for the teaching profession (Van der Stoep and Louw, 1984).

Although the assessment during the second and third practice teaching periods is basically also subjective, we believe that the procedures are structured to the extent that a reliable image of the student's teaching abilities does emerge. In fact, assessment procedures are structured in accordance with criteria of formative assessment as well as to identify and diagnose specific weaknesses or problems. The assessment of the second teaching practice is limited in scope and depth in comparison to the third period because the student has only been exposed to a limited range of teaching-learning related concepts. Also, the student has only had limited exposure to micro-teaching situations. During the third teaching practice period the assessment is much more intensive and it is expected that the student must exhibit clear evidence to prove actual teaching competence and competence to design the total teaching-learning situation accountably. For this reason the assessment is scaled, the second period carrying less weight than the third.

We find that many students who are at sea during the second period improve remarkably during the third period due to many factors, e.g. a closer and more realistic identification with the teaching profes-

sion leading to greater commitment; better understanding and integration of teaching related pedagogic concepts; greater sensitivity and understanding of the situatedness of school pupils and important external variables (group characteristics and dynamics, school subject policy, differences between the general atmosphere and attitudes of schools, the social characteristics within which the school functions, etc.); greater mobility in integrating teaching skills meaningfully; greater maturity on the part of the students, etc. Video-recorded micro-teaching situations in no small measure accounts for the improvement in performance.

A committee of the department decides on the final mark for practice teaching, treating each student individually. The final allocation of marks is based on the second and third practice teaching sessions, weighted as mentioned above, as well as on the micro-teaching cumulative and formative assessment. The confidential reports of school principals and participating senior teachers is also taken into account. The mark a student is given for practice teaching is very important because the student has to gain a distinction in order to qualify cum laude for the post-graduate teacher's diploma. On the other hand, the training course culminates in practice teaching and therefore the careful assessment of student's achievements provide important feedback to assess the training program as a whole.

3. Practice teaching - some issues and problems.

Like most educational technology, much was initially expected of video-recorded micro-teaching sessions. Careful planning, training

of lecturers in the use of the technology and staging micro-teaching situations, adjustments to the training curriculum, establishing liaison with host schools, etc. went into the initial phase of introducing the system. Intensive study and trial runs were made in order to meet the psychological and social demands the technology insists upon (Perlberg, 1979).

Our experience, shared by Cooper (1980), is that at the end of intensive micro-teaching experiences, students demonstrate substantial improvement in certain teaching skills. However, we also share the axperience of Meyer (1966) that the skills mastered in micro-teaching situations are generally not adequately realized in the classroom during the second and third practice teaching periods. We have also found that the reason for the disappointing display of skills mastered in the micro-teaching situation in actual classroom situations is due to the "halo-effect" of lecturing staff and host teachers, or in the words of Copeland: "--- There is a strong relationship between the student teacher's tendency toward skill usage of the co-operating teacher with whom the student teacher works" (1978, p 97).

Being aware of this tendency, we try and involve co-operating teachers in such a way that they encourage student teachers to freely use the skills they have mastered. This only partially addresses the problem because there is enough evidence to suggest that the pupils very definately have to be taken into account in the sense that they are comfortable with the host teacher's style, methods and strategies and therefore respond more meaningfully to skills displayed by the teacher that are in accord with those of the host

teacher.

One of the disquieting problems of assessment of the practice teaching of students to emerge during the past decades, is the very low corrolation between marks allocated by different lecturers of the faculty to the same student and especially the disparity in the marks allocated by university staff and senior teachers of host schools. Obviously lecturers and senior teachers are not assessing the same activities or skills or their priorities of specific skills and competencies are not in harmony or the same. Lecturers of the university were rewarding quite different things when they assessed students. In this respect we share the findings of Stones and Webster (1984) that there were no real identifiable consensual criteria of teaching competencies shared by the university and senior teachers of host schools.

This led to two related strategies: on the one hand participating senior teachers and principals of host schools are fully informed of the criteria for assessment by means of carefully constructed materials. Subject Didactics lecturers also re-inforce the criteria during visits to the schools by means of structured discussions. Wherever possible, senior teachers are identified who themselves have studied for higher degrees in the Faculty of Education. Although these teachers may be positively oriëntated in terms of academic and professional expectations, the teaching and subject policies laid down by the education authorities do not always reflect the expectations, aims and procedures of the responsible university teaching staff. For this reason an extensive liaison program with the inspectorate has been established; firstly to provide an overt

platform for the inspectorate to inform the students of official policy and secondly to create a covert situation to enable university teachers to inform the inspectorate of recent developments in subject teaching.

The second strategy is directed internally: all faculty members participate in two "refresher" programs during the year specifically aimed at interpreting criteria of assessment in specific teaching situations. The first program co-incides with the three-day orientation program of students prior to the observation practice teaching period in January. The program takes the form of didactic analysis of video-recorded teaching situations. Each member of staff assesses the presentation, allocates marks and then takes part in a discussion led by a senior staff member of the Department of Didactic Pedagogics and Subject Didactics. In this way it is hoped that specific criteria is given the same priority. However, it is our experience that a lecturer interested in socio-pedagogic dynamics or psycho-pedagogic dynamics, is inclined to stress these areas more in their assessment. This in itself is not negative, the student at least has the benefit of expert comment on specific aspects of the lesson, and, if interpreted and integrated wisely, this kind of assessment can be especially valuable in formative evaluation and in the analysis and diagnosis of specific teaching problems. The second "refresher" is offered prior to the third practice teaching period and basically it has the same aims as the first.

A second, and possibly more important problem, is the fact that very few students who complete the post graduate course actually fail teaching practice and practically all that "fail", endeavour to

pass when retaking their final teaching practice assessment. In approaching this problem, the idea is not to consider how to increase the failure rate, but to "contemplate the enourmously disproportionate expenditure of resources on making distinctions among students which, in the final analyses, are redundant" (Stones and Webster, 1984, p 173). We find no mitigation for the lecturer who proclaims that he "knows a good/bad one when he sees one" because at the end of the day his assessment does not affect the outcome. We have found that the time and effort spent on assessment exercises can be employed much more effectively in a form of formative evaluation. Video-taped micro-teaching experiences provide an excellent means to enhance and actualize this kind of assessment because at the same time it provides excellent opportunity for diagnostic analysis.

Extremely low failure rates do not necessarily imply low standards. Even in our educationally "enlightened" era there are still professors who equate high failure rates with quality teaching and learning, an arrogant attitude and state of mind illustrated by the apochryphal story of the professor, who, when asked why 80% of the students failed a course of study, answered "Because they did not get enough marks". We have all met with examples of high levels of failure in courses where the students who have survived, evidence the lowest levels of competence and understanding. High levels of failure generally indicate indifferent teaching, bad curriculum design and equally bad and invalid assessment (Kachelhoffer, 1985). Without being too optimistic or kind, low failure rates could well be ascribed to excellent training and perceptive in-course advice

and counselling leading to student withdrawal from the teaching profession before completing the course (Stones and Webster, 1984). The way in which our integrated four-year teaching baccalaureat is constructed, allows for student withdrawal, after appropriate counselling, without serious disruption. The first observation practice teaching period serves the same purpose as far as our post-graduate teaching diploma students are concerned.

Some of the problems mentioned earlier in connexion with the problems of assessment of teaching competence and the low failure rate are also relevant. Whatever individual lecturers may say about specific student performance, when it comes to the final allocation of marks or symbols there seems to be an implicit recognition of the difficulty and responsibility of their task which explains the virtual impossibility of arriving at consensus. If one looks at the gradual disappearance of elaborate rating scales during the past decade, it is obvious that this problem is recognized by responsible and sensitive trainers of teachers. However, the important point is that virtually all those students who complete the course of study and take the final practical teaching assessment, pass. The question which arises out of this fact is, why not abolish the pass/fail procedure? This would fall in the same category as abolishing the elaborate rating scale. On the other hand, assessment procedures do serve a function other than student assessment.

There is an obvious movement towards summative evaluation in approaches to final assessment of student teaching. This kind of evaluation implies once and for all final judgement. Formative evaluation on the other hand also implies analyses and diagnosis and

for this reason the approach can be considered diagnostic evaluation (Hannah and Oosthuizen, 1983, Stones and Webster, 1974). Diagnostic evaluation provides continuous analytical feedback about their teaching to students and is therefore much more useful than when macro or global categories of assessment are used. However, this kind of feedback takes much more time and effort on the part of the lecturer. Diagnostic evaluation directed at identification and analysis of teaching strengths and weaknesses is of decisive importance in enhancing the strengths and eliminating the weaknesses as far as possible. The supportive role of lecturers during practice teaching is to provide and create the conditions necessary for the improvement of the students teaching performance. Diagnostic evaluation is continuous and therefore the lecturers task is also to help the student to develop certain diagnostic skills to assess their own performance (Stones, 1984; Kachelhoffer, 1984).

4. Video-recorded micro-teaching experiences and assessment of students' practice teaching.

Three sources of video-recorded teaching situations are used in the training of post graduate student teachers : recordings of practicing senior teachers teaching specific high school subjects; recordings of students' own teaching in high school classes, and; recordings of student's micro-teaching with either pupils or a group of their own peers as classmembers. Recordings are therefore made in the school, in the subject didactics classroom and, in a more formal setting, in the video recording studio in the faculty building. Recordings are made by specialists provided by the Audio-Visual department of the universities' Technical Services organization or by lec-

turers who have had some basic training in video-recording.

After the recording has been made the student submits the recording and the following documents to the responsible lecturer : preparation, information concerning the external variables (context) of the school and class where the recording is made, a questionnaire completed by the student (self-assessment) and a questionnaire completed by the pupils concerning their experience of the lesson (See Appendix A, B and C). The lecturer views the recording with the student after completing a short questionnaire concerning the student to be assessed and then completes a form concerning the quantitative assessment of teaching achievements (See Appendix D and E). Having studied the recording and all the questionnaires, the lecturer and student discuss the various aspects in depth. A joint decision is made as to follow-up procedures.

This kind of evaluation takes as central the need for students to demonstrate, in their teaching and their assessment of their teaching, a knowledge of pedagogical principles that is likely to be of abiding and durable usefulness and importance when they have left the university. For this reason students' lessons are presented as pedagogical problems and in this way the student is led in genuine investigation into aspects of teaching. Students therefore take a lesson from their practical work in schools, make a detailed study of its planning and execution and then make an analytical appraisal after teaching. Students write up an account of this work and the report forms an important element in their teaching assessment.

Students involved in this kind of work are involved in rigourous

study of the theory and practice of teaching as exemptified in their own attempts. This procedure is not only conducive to the development of insight, it also provides important material for the lecturer to use in counselling students. Reports and recordings provide rich and diverse material for the appraisal of teaching that is totally different from that provided by conventional student lessons and the too often a-theoretical discussion between the student and lecturer afterwards. This kind of assessment effectively does away with assessing theory and practice as divorced entities. Furthermore, this method of assessment is prospective in its intent in the sense that it focusses on the degree of insight students have into their strengths and weaknesses, providing areas for strengthening and improvement.

The basic approach taken in this kind of video-recorded formative assessment is that all students must achieve a level of competence deemed adequate for entry into the professeion while at the same time the imprecise nature of the assessment of teaching ability is explicitly acknowledged. Our experience is that practically all the students achieve this level of competence after the third teaching practice period. Most of the students have surpassed the level in most aspects of their teaching; in some aspects more than others. The profile of teaching competence arrived at by this method of assessment, identifies strengths and weaknesses but are judged in comparison with their own level of competence in the various aspects of teaching and not in comparison with the achieved competence of other students (Stones and Webster, 1984, p 176). This procedure fosters and nurtures the individuality of the student, expressed in a unique teaching style - an aspect of the teachers' presentation

most appreciated by pupils.

The intrinsic importance of video-recorded teaching situations in this method of assessment cannot be over emphasised, especially where a lecturing staff of 50 are responsible for assessing 430 finalists!

5. Conclusion

Although most students are initially apprehensive of appearing at the other end of the tube, virtually all are intrigued with the possibilities of appearing in front of a camera. The most important problem to overcome in this respect is to capitalize on the somewhat universal inclination to perform without becoming overly involved with the technical aspects of the medium (Van Son, 1978). Subjective responses requesting both positive and negative comments are solicited and the following are typical:

"I strongly feel that there was no choice but to analyze my teaching thoroughly. I'd say I'd feel confident in appearing before a class to teach this topic. To me this is important because it takes a while for me to feel really confident about my own performance. I found the procedure most interesting; however, presenting in front of a camera made me a bit nervous - but you get used to the camera".

"At the beginning I was negative, basically because of fear of the camera, inexperience of this kind of procedure, etc. Once I began working on the problem, I actually enjoyed the preparation, presentation and analysis of my teaching. I like the feeling of really

understanding certain pedagogic concepts and principles. Having to 'perform' in front of the camera, made me aware of the need to really do a good and competent job".

Our experience supports the underlying principle of this form of training and assessment in that it offers a much more fruitful approach to the stimulation of continuous professional development. This, to our mind, is what teacher training is all about and in this way a substantial contribution can be made to train teachers in the basics of teaching, enabling them to meet the demands of our information age professionally and wisely.

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Information concerning external variables (context)

(to be completed by the student and submitted for formative evaluation)

1. Characteristics of the community the school serves: nature, rural/urban, affluent/middle class/deprived, value judgements, typical occupations of parents, etc.

2. Characteristics of the school : nature (boys, girls, co-educational), curriculum structure (academic; agricultural; art, music and ballet; technical, etc), facilities, discipline, spirit, policy, style, etc.

3. Subject characteristics : discipline, nature of the theme, level of complexity, aims and objectives, etc.

4. Class characteristics : homogeneous or heterogeneous grouping, number of pupils, class spirit and disposition, relationship to authority, etc.

5. Pupil characteristics : sex, age, intellectual potential, state of prior knowledge and readiness for new content, relationship to order and discipline, etc.

Questionnaire to be completed by the student

(Give your own evaluation of the quality of your performance concerning the aspects listed below. Use the five-point scale to guide you in your self-assessment).

5 = excellent; 4 = good; 3 = fair; 2 = must improve; 1 = weak.

Score		1	2	3	4	5
Category	Specific aspect					
1. Preparation	Content					
	Form					
	Modalities					
2. Communication	Exposing new content					
	Establishing relationships					
3. Subject of theme competence	Subject knowledge					
	Subject skills					
4. Introduction and application of teaching aids	Apparatus					
	Programs					

5. The progress of the lesson

At what stage of the lesson did you experience marked [problems | X] [success | ✓]

response to your greeting ☐ prior knowledge ☐ stating the lesson problem ☐

exposition ☐ control ☐ exercises ☐

applications ☐ testing ☐

6. Control — Could you control the pupil's progress in time?

[mostly] [partially] [uncertain]

7. Authority — Were there any changes in the quality of your authority relationship with the class?

[weakening] [improving]

8. Result — Do you think you achieved your teaching and learning aims?

[completely] [partially] [no]

Questionnaire to be completed by the pupils

(Make a ✓ next to the most appropriate description)

1.	How did you experience the lesson problem?	easy | | average | | difficult | |
2.	How well do you understand the topic?	well | | reasonable | | not at all | |
3.	Did you enjoy the lesson?	a lot | | reasonable | | not at all | |
4.	What aspect of the lesson did you find outstanding?	new information | | relationship with the teacher | | new skills | |
5.	Were enough exercises given?	adequate | | reasonable | | too little | |
6.	Are you capable of applying the solutions to related problems?	completely | | partially | | uncertain | |
7.	What are your feelings about the subject?	enthusiastic | | acceptable | | | sceptical | |

8. How did you experience the teachers' presentation?

inspired		satisfied		disappointed	

9. What to your mind did the teacher do
   (a) best?
   (b) less successfully?

10. When did you feel the most uncertain during the lesson?

beginning		stating the problem	
exposition of new content			
control		application	testing	

Information concerning the student to be assessed

Age : _____

Sex : _____

Academic training : _____

Experience : _____

Appearance/Personality : _____

Level of socialization : _____

Level of self-discipline : _____

Style : _____

Quantitative assessment of teaching achievements

(Make use of the five-point scale to guide you in your assessment)

5 = excellent; 4 = good; 3 = average (adequate); 2 = weak; 1 = poor

A. Preparation		1	2	3	4	5
1. Content	: Reduction (hierarchy of aims/ concepts)					
	Command of subject/subject algorithms					
	Subject style.					
2. Modalities	: Teaching input complements pupils' achievement.					
	Applicability to teaching aids					
3. Form	: Didactic fundamental forms and nuances (framework)					
	Didactic principles and nuances (reflecting nature of topic/subject)					
4. Communication	: Intensive support forms (intersubjectivity					
	Limited support forms (intrasubjectivity)					
Total						

B. Execution		1	2	3	4	5
1. Enliven- ment	: Giving meaning (intrinsic/extrinsic)					
	Stating the problem (known vs new)					
2. Class control	: Accompanied/educational/organizational (management of Individualizing/Socialising, learning opportunities)					
3. Course of lesson	: Content as aim (creating new experience)					
	Content as means (applicability)					
4. Sensitivity to feedback	: Positive feedback (implicit/explicit)					
	Negative aspects					
5. Effective use of time	: Time to carry out tasks (adequate?)					
	Economic use of time					
Total						

C. Control	1	2	3	4	5
1. Diagnostic					
2. During every phase					
Total :					

FINAL MARK : _____ %